

# Bard

Bard College  
**Bard Digital Commons**

---

Robert Kelly Manuscripts

Robert Kelly Archive

---

3-2004

marE2004

Robert Kelly  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts)

---

## Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "marE2004" (2004). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 839.  
[http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk\\_manuscripts/839](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/839)

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@bard.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

# Bard

## **SCREE**

It's one of those days again  
when I want to keep using the word scree  
hard as it is to work it into  
conversations not about mountain climbing  
one says it's going to snow today  
and another says seven inches or no  
says another twelve twelve you'd think  
I have fallen among mystics apostles  
patriarchs days of the week

I am Jacob I looked at myself  
in the mirror and said Call me Jack  
and all the rest said Jack is for John  
not for Jacob though Jack sounds  
so like Jacques which Jacob turned  
somehow into in France how do they  
get away with doing such things to  
ordinary words? but I still insist  
you call me Jack Jack means money  
flag and flagstaff shoe tool spinning  
gizmo sailor any man in the street

don't worry about the French we're here  
waiting for the snow to cover our arches  
with aches and pains and Jack's the name

I wake up full of investment strategies  
blank notebooks for instance just fill them  
with words and words are free use them  
fill the book and sell it think of what  
a Shakespeare notebook would be worth  
especially in ink and start-up cost only  
a buck at the Dollar Store you'll get  
30,000% return on your investment  
OK Jack it goes with the territory the lost  
goldmine the crazy old man with the Coca  
Cola patent he'll sue their socks off  
be with me whatever my name  
there's only one of me most days  
and most of me love you I am your Jack  
spill me down your hill the sun comes  
out one last time where had it been in?

16 March 2004

## A DERIVATION

*after Ethan Abramson*

*He said something but I am  
not sure* he said something  
but I am not sure he said  
something I needed to hear  
and if I did maybe he  
meant what he said and also  
wrote it down so I could  
see it and be sure and rounded  
his old a out and made it o

because he wrote samething  
and made it something  
but is it something he said  
that he wrote down or was it  
something he just wrote down  
about what somebody said

the way I wrote our just now  
when I say something  
that he wrote down that somebody  
was saying something  
and just kept writing till  
something gets said

or not, sometimes there is no  
way ever to be sure

and he's not sure either  
I know that for sure  
because he said so  
and wrote it down  
and his I became my he  
but his he stayed he.

How many of us  
ever said or will say  
anything let alone  
something let alone  
something said  
worth saying and do I  
I do and I do  
but I'm not sure  
are you or is he

who said something  
but I am not sure  
what he meant  
or if I heard anything  
would I even then  
be sure he spoke  
and I heard and that

some meaning happens  
so I would say it too  
and try to mean it  
the way I only say  
what I hear  
I listen hard  
and write it down  
like a kiss you steal  
when everybody's drunk  
and nobody remembers.

16 March 2004

[Dream effluvia:]

*Four red eights*  
*a double deck*  
*warm Chinese calligraphy*  
chased me through  
the last three hours

sleep I tried and then  
the Eight of Hearts  
would wake me  
or Sixteen Diamonds  
for sixteen loves

and eight means quickly,  
*do it fast* behind the bushes  
of the gentle heart  
to which so quickly  
the animal ascends

eight red lights even never stop me.

17 March 2004

=====

Certainly I don't want to tell  
what's on my mind.  
If I peel that away you'll see  
the aching vacancy inside.  
Echoless transparency of it.  
You are the only thing I ever thought.

17 March 2004



## SLALOM

Skier downhill  
resting in his avalanche  
awaiting rescue

speed means something  
only for a while  
the rest is being buried  
in particulars

hearing the search party's cries  
answered them weakly  
a dog will come

tonight you will sit by the fire  
and complain: time  
did this to me  
we are poor little creatures  
caught in its gears

nothing broken  
call again  
the dog is near.

17 March 2004

## LOST IN THE HERMENEUTIC TRIANGLE

How can poems be long  
and still say a thing?  
Or belong to one  
who might read them,  
carrying the words  
around in mind  
for a while afterwards,  
ballast, scripture,  
science, truth?  
All you know  
is what they say.  
And all you think  
is what they said.  
Say. Think. Know.  
Sink without a trace.

17 March 2004

## **NIGHTSOIL**

But these too are things I think,  
not the dark cabbages I only trust  
that rise up to be said

nightsoil they call  
what comes out of us,  
in China they spread it on the fields  
and strange wheat answered.

17 March 2004

## **O HAZARD**

me clear  
o dative ear  
that speaks  
by listening

2  
the very small number  
of all human sciences  
intercourse all night  
and animals  
evidently multiply

and schools of fish  
act out calculus

18 March 2004

## **SPEAK ME**

the way words used to  
before they slept  
the famous Adorno aphasia

calamitied into coma,  
betrayed by what they had  
themselves betrayed—  
the heart by numbers?

no – that all beauty  
seemed to be some  
people's own

and they owned  
the lovely and the true  
so had the right

to kill the incongruous.

18 March 2004

=====

ran out of words

just as I was coming to understand

why words run out

18 III 04

## **AMBASSADORS**

We can no longer know  
what people look like.  
People don't have faces for us.  
The sun is out after all the snowing.

As if somebody understands  
but not near at hand  
you can hear the word  
uncoiling on the paper

from the gliding pen  
you can from the sound of it  
almost guess what she will be  
writing to her friend

I have sat in a room  
listening to the pencils rub  
a dozen of them all at once  
along the rough lined paper

so all the words had music too  
I seemed to be the only one  
who knew how to hear  
since I was blind then

having no pencil  
can you think without a word  
can you have a word  
without saying it

without writing it down  
swish of pencils like long skirts  
coming towards me up long corridors  
crowded with wind

the words come close now  
sparrows on the snow  
they try to write  
but all my blind eyes hear

is someone coming towards me  
through a huge old house  
I thought was home  
always there always around me

skirts of her peignoir  
swaying against her ankles  
feet making no sound  
on the dusty rich old carpet



until she is at me  
and the pencils can lie down  
because all the known words  
have come between us.

18 March 2004

## **THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF**

someday the other thing will happen  
write the truth down every day  
and bring it close

this is just a scene from the long never

that always uncoils  
down the corridors of always house  
and comes to meet me

my Madeleine my mercy.

18 March 2004

=====

return of the repressed  
the blue river  
turned red  
the boat sails beneath the sea  
sped by what wind?  
listen!

18 III 04

## DERIVATIONS

*after Cody Schreger*

*Kindly check your feet before exiting the aircraft*

because they must be very big indeed

to hold you on this narrow earth

my mother was 5'2" wore size eleven

there is no reason, no proportion,

I mighty magic of the never-ending renaissance,

no Golden Section,

these Pyramids of Egypt are not buildings

not temples not tombs not reminders

they are nothing but the boltheads of the screws

that hold Africa to earth, hold earth in place

and make you *have* a mother,

kindly, a kindly mother

is our matter,

the rapt and radiant *substantia*

from which *essentia* dances out and

shows its nakedness, its *esse*,

it is being, is ant and eagle, any friend

dear friend of all such lonely givings

the craft that brought you here  
crashlanded in an ocean meadow  
among the waves the seat flotation cushions  
bob up and down like metaphors in Homer  
and your feet can't find the floor,  
there is no land anywhere, none  
of your preparations counted,  
every minute's an emergency, nothing  
ever ordinary, your feet flurry  
in the yielding waters, water lily,  
flower head, drowning satyr, how your lotus petals  
open, lymph, nymph, lachrymal duct and dactyl dying,  
leave your body home next time you fly.

18 March 2004